

Message Text

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71

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /051 W

----- 125332

R 092130Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 270

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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USIA FOR ILA AND IPS

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR ES HO

SUBJ: LOCAL REACTIONS:SALVADORAN-HONDURAN NEGOTIATIONS

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALAPA 637, (B) SAN SALVADOR 502 (C) SAN SALVADOR 553.

1. DESPITE THE FACT THAT EL SALVADOR IS NOW IN THE MIDST OF ITS LEGISLATIVE AND MUNICIPAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE MATTER OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH HONDURAS IS CONSPICUOUS BY ITS TOTAL ABSENCE AS AN ISSUE, NOTWITHSTANDING RECENT HIGH VISIBILITY OCCURRENCES RELATING TO IT. SO FAR NEITHER THE GOVERNMENT NOR THE OPPOSITION HAS MENTIONED THIS SUBJECT IN THEIR CAMPAIGNING, THE PRESUMPTION IS THAT BOTH SIDES ARE TAKING A POSITIVE APPROACH AND RECOGNIZE THAT IT IS NOT A MATTER TO BE EXPLOITED IN A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN.

2. IN MARKED CONTRAST TO INITIAL FRONT-PAGE, ALMOST EUPHORIC NEWSPAPER PLAY (REFTEL B), SUBSEQUENT SALVADORAN MEDIA REACTION TO THE JANUARY 29 BORGONOVO-ORFILA TEGUCIGALPA VISIT HAS BEEN ESSENTIALLY MODERATE AND LOW-KEY. THE FAIRLY STEADY COMMERCIAL WIRE SERVICE COVERAGE WAS ALMOST ENTIRELY BASED ON REPEATS OF HONDURAN WIRE COVERAGE. THE MODEST LOCAL REPORTING HAS BEEN

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GENERALLY POSITIVE ALBEIT COUCHED IN WAIT-AND-SEE TONES. THIS

ALSO APPLIES TO THE GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC, BUT MEAGER, COVERAGE GIVEN TO THE FEBRUARY 1 MIAMI MEETING OF FONMINS BOROGNOVO AND PERDOMO.

3. SIGNIFICANT EDITORIAL REACTION TO DATE HAS BEEN LIMITED TO THE CONSERVATIVE LA PRENSA GRAFICA WHICH, IN A FEBRUARY 2 EDITORIAL, STRESSED THE BREAKTHROUGH IMPORTANCE OF THE "OPEN SKY" ARRANGEMENT AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT "THE FRATERNAL EMBRACE OF THE TWO FOREIGN MINISTERS PORTENDS NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES." IN ANOTHER EDITORIAL (FEBRUARY 3) LA PRENSA GRAFICA CALLED FOR A RETURN TO REGIONAL INTEGRATION, STATING THAT "THE CLAMOR FOR NORMALIZING RELATIONS WILL PROBABLY INCREASE.....BECAUSE NORMALIZATION IS THE BASIS FOR THE INTEGRATION PROCESS AND FOR THE REACTIVATION OF THE C.A. COMMON MARKET, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY FAVOR HONDURAS". IN A FEBRUARY 6 EDITORIAL THIS PAPER ALLUDED TO THE BOROGNOVO-ORFILA VISIT IN EXPRESSING CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM REGARDING THE PROPOSED FEBRUARY 16 CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS' MEETING. THIS MEETING, LA PRENSA GRAFICA STATED, "WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH SEEKING A REAL SOLUTION TO THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. UNTIL THESE DIFFERENCES ARE RESOLVED, THE MERGENCE OF A VITAL CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMUNITY WILL BE STIFLED".

4. COMMENT: SINCE ALL MAJOR DAILIES EMPLOY SELF-CENSORSHIP BASED UPON GOES GUIDELINES, THE SCOPE AND SLANT OF COVERAGE OF POLITICAL MATTERS PROBABLY REFLECTS AN AWARENESS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY GUIDELINES. ALTHOUGH MAJOR DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS SUCH AS NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS DRAW OFF NEWS MEDIA PLAY, IT IS APPARENT THAT THE GOES IS TRYING TO BE RESPONSIBLE AND POSITIVE IN REGARD TO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND SETTLEMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, NEGOTIATIONS, BOUNDARY CLAIMS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SANSAA00695
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760049-0692
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760267/aaaachhb.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 SAN SALVADOR 502
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 JUL 2004 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <13 JUL 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOCAL REACTIONS:SALVADORAN-HONDURAN NEGOTIATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, ES, HO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006